



## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

May 17, 2021

The Honorable Sherri Ybarra  
Superintendent of Public Instruction  
State Department of Education  
650 W. State Street  
Boise, ID 83720-0027

Ms. Debbie Critchfield  
President  
Idaho State Board of Education  
P.O. Box 83720  
Boise, ID 83720-0037

Dear Superintendent Ybarra and State Board President Critchfield:

I am writing in response to the Idaho State Department of Education's (ISDE's) request on October 15, 2020, for a waiver to permit ISDE to field test its new Idaho Alternate Assessment (IAA) in science in grades 5, 8 and 11 in school year (SY) 2020-2021.

As you know, on September 25, 2020, ISDE received a one-year waiver of certain Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) requirements so that the State could administer a census field test of the ISAT-science in spring 2021 for all eligible students enrolled in grades 5, 8 and 11. This new ISAT-science replaces the prior assessments in science and are aligned with new Idaho science content standards. Through the waiver, ISDE is approved to administer the field test to all eligible students, but not set academic achievement standards and not report assessment field test results to parents, educators or the public in the 2020-2021 school year. However, ISDE will hold districts and schools accountable for participation in the field test. In the additional request on October 15, 2020, ISDE requested to extend this waiver to permit the State to administer a field test of its new alternate assessment, the IAA science, so that the general and alternate science assessments will follow the same development schedule.

After reviewing ISDE's request, I find that the waiver will benefit school children in Idaho, so I am approving an extension of ISDE's request for the 2020-2021 school year and waiving the following statutory requirements of the ESEA, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act:

- Sections 1111(b)(1)(A) and (C) and 1111(b)(2)(B)(ii) and (v)(II), which require the State to establish student academic achievement standards in science and implement high-quality, yearly student academic assessments in science that are aligned with those standards to measure student achievement and to inform instruction.
- Sections 1111(b)(2)(B)(x) and (xii) and 1111(h)(1)(C)(ii) and (2)(C), which require the State and local educational agencies to provide individual student reports to parents, teachers and principals and to include the results of science assessments on State and local report cards.

Please note that this waiver is only applicable for the 2020-2021 school year during the administration of the statewide field test of the IAA-science. Failure to administer alternate science assessments in the 2021-2022 school year that meet all requirements would result in ISDE being out of compliance with Title I of the ESEA and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which could result in a number of enforcement actions, including withholding of funds.

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<http://www.ed.gov/>

*The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

We appreciate our continued relationship with ISDE and remain committed to working with you. If you have any questions, please contact my staff at: [ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov](mailto:ESEA.Assessment@ed.gov).

Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education.

Sincerely,

/s/

Ian Rosenblum  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Programs  
Delegated the Authority to Perform the  
Functions and Duties of the Assistant Secretary  
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

cc: Kevin Whitman, Director of Assessment and Accountability